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Friday, November 3, 2006

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Fatal blow to tot called an accident

Kid play adds heat on mom

BY RUBY L. BAILEY
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

November 3, 2006

A 12-year-old girl told authorities she accidentally caused fatal injuries to a 2-year-old foster child who was in her adoptive mother's care, a Wayne County judge was told Thursday.

The girl, the daughter of Charlise Adams-Rogers, told police she was playing with Isaac Lethbridge, throwing the boy onto a mattress, when he missed and hit the floor, Adams-Rogers' attorney, Marc Shreeman, told Judge Sheila Ann Gibson. Isaac died of blunt force trauma.

A Child Protective Services worker later testified that she has read an investigation report that contains the 12-year-old's account of what happened Aug. 16.

The statements were made at a Wayne County Juvenile Court hearing as Adams-Rogers continued her fight to keep custody of the girl and a second adopted daughter, who is almost 2.

State Department of Human Services workers removed the girls as well as Isaac's 4-year-old sister, who was in foster care, from Adams-Rogers' Detroit home. No criminal charges have been filed in connection with Isaac's death, although the investigation is ongoing, said Maria Miller, spokeswoman for the Wayne County prosecutor.

Adams-Rogers, who was home at the time of Isaac's death, said previously she didn't know how Isaac was injured. Anywhere from four to eight people were in the three-bedroom west-side home when the boy died and as many as 12 people lived there, according to testimony Thursday.

Adams-Rogers, 59, was at the hearing but declined to comment.

"She failed to protect Isaac and allowed Isaac to be injured causing his death," testified Teresa Collins, the Child Protective Services worker who filed the petition to terminate Adams-Rogers' parental rights.

Collins said she was aware that the 12-year-old told police she caused the boy's injuries.

The Free Press is not publishing the girl's name because of her age.

Isaac's father, Matt Lethbridge, who attended part of the hearing, said that even if the girl's story is true, Adams-Rogers is ultimately responsible.

"She failed to provide a safe home for my son," he said.

Experts testified Thursday that Isaac suffered a brain hemorrhage, a broken clavicle, burns and bruises, some as recent as two days before his death. Shreeman, citing the 12-year-old's account, said the toddler was burned after being splashed with bathwater.



Isaac Lethbridge died Aug. 16.

Boguslaw Pietak, an assistant Wayne County medical examiner who did Isaac's autopsy, said it was possible some injuries were sustained in a hard fall, but that the burns were more likely caused by an object or steam than by a hot liquid.

Dr. Pierre Morris, a Detroit family practice doctor, testified that he saw the boy on Aug. 4, when another doctor in his office asked him to look at bruises on Isaac's forehead and legs. Morris said he saw the boy again on Aug. 14, two days before his death, and Isaac's bruises had started to heal.

When shown autopsy photos of Isaac on Thursday, Morris said the boy had bruises on his back that were not present when he saw him.

Morris said he tried to call Child Protective Services to report his suspicion of child abuse sometime before Aug. 14, but the phone "just rang and rang and rang. No one picked up."

One of Adams-Rogers' former foster children, Hope Bryant, 16, testified about the day Isaac died, saying she heard one of Adams-Rogers' adopted daughters screaming in a hallway.

"She was terrified," testified Hope, who has since been moved to another foster home. "She kept yelling, 'Grandma.' "

Adams-Rogers called police, said Hope and others. When they arrived, an officer was led upstairs to the bedrooms.

David Kline, a Detroit officer, testified that the 12-year-old girl was "throwing a whole bunch of stuff in a large garbage bag."

He called her attitude "odd."

"The little one had just passed away in a bedroom," Kline said. "Not most people would be in the bedroom. Not right away."

Contact **RUBY L. BAILEY** at 313-222-6651 or rbailey@freepress.com.

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Published November 3, 2006

Accused killer's son says dad hit boy, 2

13-year-old cites incident not related to death

What's next

- Samuel Courtland's trial resumes at 9 a.m. today. He is accused of murdering and abusing Jalyn Daniel, the 2-year-old son of his former live-in girlfriend.

By Susan Vela
Lansing State Journal

A 13-year-old boy testified against his father, Samuel Courtland, Thursday, saying he once saw him hit the 2-year-old son of Courtland's former live-in girlfriend.

According to Courtland's son, his father had punished Jalyn Daniel in the kitchen by striking him three times on the bottom, but not very hard.

Jalyn had misbehaved, but prosecutors contend Courtland's stricter punishments were abuse and led to Jalyn's death on May 14, 2005.

Courtland, 32, is charged with murder and child abuse and could face life in prison if found guilty.

Jalyn's mother, Cynthia Daniel, already has pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and child abuse.

Prosecutors have said she ignored the abuse happening in her home on Grovenburg Road until it was too late.

She will be sentenced next week, possibly for three to six years, and must testify against Courtland as part of a plea agreement.

Evidence presented Thursday also focused on Daniel's parenting style.

Jalyn's 8-year-old sibling "indicated that the mother has whipped him, but not as bad as Sam," said Stephen Guertin, medical director of Sparrow Hospital's Regional Children's Center.

Guertin also testified that some of the marks found on the child's body seemed to be from a belt and could be from beatings that happened up to two years ago.

There also were marks indicating that the child had been tied at his ankles, elbows and wrists.

Defense attorney Peter Samouris has said his client denies hurting Daniel's children. Instead, he said that she pleaded guilty to save herself.

Thursday's testimony also delved into Jalyn's last days alive.

Family friend Lillian Martin said she and Cynthia Daniel returned from a Mount Pleasant casino in the early hours of May 13, 2005, to find Jalyn wheezing and groggy.

"He needed to go to the hospital," Martin said. "His hand was swollen blue (and) swollen like a pincushion.

"I wasn't really concerned about the hand being swollen. I was concerned about the wheezing."

Both Courtland and Daniel refused to take the child to the hospital. Jalyn died the next day.

He had burn marks on his feet, crushed bones in one hand and the imprint of a household iron on his back and buttocks.

His limbs were stiffened with rigor mortis, indicating he had been dead for hours.

Pathologist Daniel Remick said Jalyn's injuries compromised the youngster's ability to fight infections.

Remick discovered bacterial pneumonia when studying Jalyn's lung tissue after his death.

"It was sufficiently severe that it was destroying the lung tissue," Remick said of the pneumonia.

Contact Susan Vela at 702-4248 or svela@lsj.com.

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THE MACOMB DAILY NEWS

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'Heroin aunt' admits she injected 12-year-old boy

Her mother also pleads no contest, but says she was unaware of prostitution

PUBLISHED: November 3, 2006

By Jameson Cook
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 25-year-old Warren woman admitted in court Thursday that she injected heroin into her 12-year-old nephew and gave him and her 15-year-old niece heroin and cocaine in her mother's home.

Clad in jail garb, Jacqueline Ellen Vuich pleaded guilty to all the offenses she was charged with, including first-degree child abuse and keeping a house of prostitution, and will be sentenced Nov. 29 by Judge Matthew Switalski of Macomb County Circuit Court.

Vuich, who previously denied the accusation, said in court: "I injected him with heroin," one time and admitted giving drugs to the children three more times.

The boy nearly died from the drug entering his system last Jan. 24.

Also Thursday, Jan Ruby Catton, 47, Vuich's mother and the grandmother of the two victims, pleaded no contest to eight of nine charges. She pleaded no contest to seven counts of second-degree child abuse for knowing about and failing to stop abuse and one count of maintaining a drug house. She is fighting a charge of keeping a house of

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prostitution because she claims she was unaware of it.

The no-contest plea provides Catton, who is free on a \$300,000 bond, some civil protection in court, but is treated as a guilty plea at sentencing.

Macomb County prosecutors are pleased that the women agreed not to take their cases to trial, where horrific activities at the home near 10 Mile Road and Groesbeck Highway in Warren would be recounted in detail.

"We're glad they're taking responsibility, and the kids don't have to testify," assistant Macomb prosecutor Jamie Wittenberg said.

The defendants were not offered a chance by prosecutors to plead to lower offenses because of the extreme nature of the crimes, Prosecutor Eric Smith said.

"You rely on family to protect children in the family, and here they turned this into a house of horrors," Smith said. "We're happy that we'll be able to keep (Vuich) off the streets. There's an opportunity for this kids to grow up in normal homes."

Catton was legal guardian of five children who lived in the Cottage Lane home. In all, nine children have been removed from the residence by Macomb County Protective Services.

Vuich, in custody in the Macomb County Jail on a \$300,000 bond, will be ordered to spend time in prison, likely at least six to 10 years, based on preliminary computing of state sentencing guidelines, although Judge Switalski could issue a sentence beyond that.

Delivering drugs to a minor carries a maximum penalty of 40 years in prison and first-degree child abuse carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison, but Wittenberg said that sentencing guidelines are higher for the child abuse offense than for drugs.

Catton, meanwhile, will face a minimum penalty of two months to 17 months, up to four years in prison for the most serious offense. She could serve her time at the Macomb County Jail if she is sentenced to one year or less.

Catton has filed a motion for the judge to reconsider dismissing the most serious charge, keeping a house of prostitution, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

The allegations of a child being injected in the arm with heroin through a syringe by their aunt shocked law enforcement officials. Police were told the boy was rushed to Henry Ford Bi-County Hospital in Warren and then transferred to Children's Hospital in Detroit after Vuich found him unconscious and informed other family members.

Police captured Vuich at the Chesterfield Township home of a family member.

Investigators learned of continuing drug use and prostitution at the red brick, ranch-style Warren home.

"They were turning tricks in rooms where children stayed," Smith said.

Neighbors on the otherwise quiet street said at the time of the arrest that they were not too surprised by the charges because of suspicious activity at the home.

Catton moved from the home to Roseville shortly after the allegations became well-

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known. She was working at the Chrysler Jefferson Avenue Plant in Detroit.

Vuich has had prior contact with law enforcement several times in recent years, as she was charged with offenses in four Macomb County communities. In May, she was sentenced to 60 days in jail for failing to pay \$300 as part of a sentence for a shoplifting case in Warren, and in March served a 90-day sentence for a conviction in Eastpointe.

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Some charges dismissed against couple accused of making children sleep in cages

CLEVELAND An Ohio judge has dismissed several charges against a couple accused of forcing some of their eleven adopted children to sleep in cages.

The judge has thrown out a felony perjury charge and four misdemeanor falsification charges, saying that the alleged crimes took place too long ago and the statute of limitations had expired.

Michael and Sharen Gravelle still face 16 counts of child endangerment.

The adopted children were taken from their home and placed in foster care last fall after a county social worker likened the wood-and-chicken-wire cages they slept in to kennels.

The Gravelles have denied mistreating the children and say the enclosures were necessary to keep the children from harming themselves or one another.

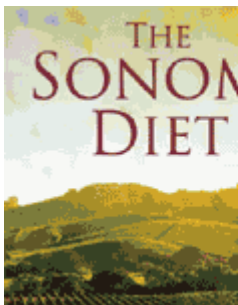
The children have problems such as fetal alcohol syndrome and a disorder that involves eating nonfood items.

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Molester gets 9 months in jail

Thursday, November 02, 2006

By Scott Hagen

shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A mother's hysterical sobs were heard echoing from a courtroom hallway Wednesday as the man who molested her daughter was sentenced to jail.

James R. Knapp, a well-known Jackson-area bankruptcy attorney from Jonesville, will spend nine months behind bars for sexually abusing the girl, who was 11 years old at the time.

The mother brought a picture of her daughter to show Circuit Judge Chad Schmucker while she read a statement to the court. She said Knapp looked the daughter in the face when he victimized her, so the judge should be able to look at her face when he passed his sentence.

"She played with dolls and SpongeBob," the mother said in court through tears. "My daughter is a compassionate, wonderful, funny little girl who likes school, horses, cats, making jewelry with beads and playing video games. ! She's innocent, and he took her innocence."

Knapp, 37, apparently befriended the single mother, who is now engaged, and then betrayed the trust he built with the little girl. The girl told Jackson County sheriff's detectives that Knapp took advantage of his alone time with her to grope her and "assist" her in touching his genitals. It continued for a year.

The Citizen Patriot is not naming the mother to protect the child's identity. The newspaper does not name victims of sexual abuse.

"Whenever we have a child victim we have a huge betrayal," Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates said. "The ramifications whenever a child is molested are lifetime ramifications. The child will be suffering a lifetime of dealing with his trauma."

Knapp and his attorney, Kenneth Hotchkiss, negotiated a plea agreement with prosecutors. The deal hinged on Schmucker sentencing Knapp within the guidelines for fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, a high-court misdemeanor. He sentenced Knapp to the maximum time he could.

"You are a sick pedophile," the mother said in court. "You are not a man. I wish you nothing but a lifetime of embarrassment and hell."

The mother never heard the sentence. After reading her statement she started yelling at Knapp's parents. A court officer led her from the courtroom as she hurled accusations. She was not held in contempt.

Hotchkiss told the court that Knapp's life is ruined. His law practice folded and he can't support his wife and two children. Knapp has been in jail since he pleaded no contest in September.

Knapp spoke briefly, saying only that he appreciated the support of family and friends. He apologized to the court for putting himself in the position he was in.

"The consequences to Mr. Knapp as a result of this conviction far outweigh what this court can do," Hotchkiss said. "I don't know if there's a real need for any more incarceration."

Knapp must register as a sex offender. He also faces sanctions from the state Attorney Discipline Board, which could revoke his license to practice law.

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ROCHELLE RILEY: Survey aims to help foster youths' futures

BY ROCHELLE RILEY

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

November 3, 2006

As part of an increased effort former foster children have better lives as adults, Wayne County Community College District plans to conduct the first-ever statewide assessment of their needs.

The survey, to be distributed to current and former foster youth, will ask questions ranging from their access to a computer to whether they are able to receive regular dental care. It also will try to determine what youth know about current services.

Overwhelming response

A Wayne State University study released last spring found that more than 49% of youth who aged out of foster care in 2002 and 2003 in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties were homeless at some point during their first three years on their own, and 25.4% were homeless immediately after aging out.

The study, done by WSU's Research Group on Homelessness and Poverty, also found that 36% had to return to the homes they were originally moved from and 16.7% lived on the streets, in cars or in abandoned buildings.

"If we can find out what they don't know, we can supply it, and if we find out what they need, we can provide it," said Dr. Curtis Ivery, chancellor of the five-campus WCCCD.

The college announced last week that it would create a \$7-million transitional residence and resource center to provide temporary housing, financial and educational information and doctor referrals for some 100-200 young adults leaving foster care.

Ivery said his office has since been deluged with phone calls lauding the project.

"Unanticipated and overwhelming," he said. "It's been like Grand Central Station here."

The center, the first of its kind in Michigan, would be housed at WCCCD's new northwest Detroit campus or on a site near Comerica Park.

Mapping ways to fill needs

Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow said the state would work with WCCCD to distribute the surveys to foster children 14 and older and former foster youth up to age 23.

"This survey is a great thing," she said. "The more information we have about the needs of our older youths, the better able we will be to develop programs and services that support ... their goals."

The surveys also will be distributed through Youth Opportunities Boards, panels of former foster youth who advocate for better aid.

WCCCD Provost Derrick Manns said the survey results would be used to create a "Most Frequently Asked Questions Guide" that volunteers and youth can use.

But the survey results will be used for so much more: They will paint a portrait of youth who got pushed into a system and then lost after leaving it.

Every bit of information the survey yields will help the state do its job better and will help the community college create something that will do for these young people what hasn't been done before: Give them a solid start.

ROCHELLE RILEY'S columns appear Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Catch her on "Am I Right?" at 8:30 p.m. Fridays on Detroit Public Television (TV-56). Contact her at rriley99@freepress.com or 313-223-4473.

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Wayne County Community College survey on the needs of youths after foster care

November 3, 2006

This survey was developed to gather information to help youths who are about to transition, or have transitioned, out of the Michigan foster care system.

Name:

Date:

Address:

Alternate address (where you will receive mail):

Phone:

E-mail:

Age:

Gender:

Do you have children? If so, how many?

Date expected to or did age out of foster care:

Employment status:

Are you currently in high school?

College?

If there were educational opportunities available to you, would you use them?

Are you aware that the State of Michigan provides money to foster youths for education and living expenses?

What types of support do you need most? (please check all that apply)

☐ Dental clinic

☐ Doctors' visit

☐ Counseling

☐ Career placement

☐ Educational opportunities

☐ Financial literacy

☐ Entrepreneurship

☐ Nutrition and healthy lifestyles

☐ Transportation

☐ Computer and Internet access

If a transitional residence center were available to you, would you use it?

Would you attend a Foster Youth Summit in Wayne County?

What specific needs do you have?

What service agencies have you used or do you know about?

Is there anything that you would like us to know about?

Please return this survey to Dr. Derrick Manns, Wayne County Community College, 801 W. Fort St., Detroit 48226. If you have questions, please call Manns at 313-496-2348.

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November 3, 2006

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State unifying required training for adoptive parents-to-be

[News 3's Alicia Smith-Anchor/Reporter](#)

November 2, 2006 - 6:24PM

BATTLE CREEK (NEWS 3)- The Department of Human Services is rolling out a uniformed training program for people wishing to become adoptive parents.

Before October 1st of this year, each county agency could put together its own training curriculum for adoptive families. But that is in the process of changing.

"Most agencies had a good core training, but it maybe wasn't consistent or maybe some agencies were so small that they didn't have regular trainings," said Kirsta Grapentine, Project Director for the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange.

"Now the state is in the process of setting up a core training that all adoptive families [in Michigan] and adoption agencies will be using," she added.

Some adoptive parents are open to the change.

"I'm not sure that would make everything better-better, but I'm sure that would be an improvement," said Yvonne Stewart, a Battle Creek mother of two adopted children, three foster children, and a biological daughter.

"Some people go into the adoption thinking that it's an easy job. It isn't an easy job," she added.

Trish Terry is a single mother of six-year-old Gabriel. She adopted him in Colorado when he was two-and-a-half-months old.

"You don't always know what the special needs are going to be when you get the child. And as they grown the needs are going to change," said Terry.

She would like to see not only improved training, but also more services offered to adoptive parents years after the adoption goes through.

If you'd like to see more on this story, click the video option. If you'd like to find out more about adoption in Michigan, click on the link below.

[Michigan Adoption Resouce Exchange](#)





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World News

Rules set to change on foreign adoptions

Thursday, November 02, 2006

By Elizabeth Bernstein, The Wall Street Journal

The rules of international adoption are about to undergo significant changes that could affect everything from the countries where Americans can adopt to the fees they'll have to pay.

More than a decade after signing it, the U.S. is close to finally implementing a global treaty known as the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, designed to curb abuses such as child trafficking that have long marred international adoptions. The State Department issued most of the final regulations earlier this year, and last month it opened the application process for U.S. adoption providers (such as agencies and attorneys) to become accredited to work on adoptions of children from the 69 Hague countries around the world.

If all goes as planned, the U.S. will ratify the Hague Convention sometime next year, though no one knows yet exactly what the new policy will mean for prospective parents. One benefit: The rules require agencies to try harder to collect health information on children.

Yet some adoption professionals say adopting a baby overseas may take longer or cost more money than it already does. The roster of countries that Americans adopt a lot of babies from could change as well, and that has some people with pending applications worried they will be caught in limbo.

"People are nervous," says Diane B. Kunz, executive director of the New York-based Center for Adoption Policy, a nonprofit group that works to educate people about domestic and international adoption. "People are saying to themselves, 'How will this affect me?'"

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Some countries that are party to the treaty but that send relatively few children to the U.S. for adoption -- such as Brazil and Mexico -- might allow more American adoptions once the U.S. implements the new guidelines, experts say. Yet at least one very popular country of origin for U.S. adoptions, Guatemala, could be closed off, due to concerns over its compliance with the new rules.

Once the U.S. ratifies the Hague treaty, the convention's regulations will govern all adoptions in countries that are party to it. It will be against the law for Americans to adopt children from countries that have ratified the treaty but are in violation of its laws, such as Guatemala. Yet Americans will still be able to adopt children from nonconvention countries; Hague rules and safeguards won't technically apply to those adoptions.

The Hague Convention is widely regarded as an important step in making international adoption safer for the child, as well as the biological and adoptive parents. Countries that are party to the treaty have to follow specific procedures and guidelines, such as setting up a central authority to monitor international adoptions. They will also have to accredit agencies or individuals that arrange adoptions of children from Hague countries.

To date, 69 countries on six continents are parties to the convention. Despite signing the treaty in 1993, the U.S. has been slow to implement its rules, in large part because of debate among adoption advocates and politicians over everything from the costs of putting the new guidelines into place to whether gays and singles should be allowed to adopt. In 2000, Congress passed the Intercountry Adoption Act, which was meant to implement the new standards. Since then, the State Department -- chosen to be the central authority on adoption for the U.S. -- has issued drafts of the regulations and responded to more than 1,500 public comments.

All the while, international adoptions by Americans have been escalating -- with even stars such as Madonna traveling abroad to adopt. In fiscal year 2005, Americans adopted about 22,700 children from other countries, up from about 17,700 in 2000 and 8,900 in 1995. The vast majority of those children come from four countries: China, Russia, Guatemala and South Korea, not all of which are parties to the treaty. (China has ratified it; Russia is expected to ratify it sometime after the U.S. does; Guatemala has ratified it but isn't in compliance with its rules; and South Korea isn't a party to it.)

Many experts believe that the Hague Convention will benefit adoptive parents by making foreign adoptions more predictable and transparent. Once the rules are implemented, U.S. adoption agencies or individuals, such as adoption lawyers, approved to work in a Hague country will go through an accrediting process, as well as the state licensing that is required now. In addition, the agency will have to carry a minimum of \$1 million in liability insurance, and in many cases will be held responsible for staff working in other countries.

"This will make it more difficult for shady operators to work in adoption

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both in countries of origin and in the U.S.," says Thomas Atwood, president of the National Council for Adoption, or NCFA, a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization based in Alexandria, Va.

No one knows exactly how many adoption providers there are in the U.S., but experts estimate there are about 400, with as many as half expected to apply for accreditation. The State Department has charged two entities with accrediting U.S. agencies and individuals to arrange for adoptions from Hague countries: the Council on Accreditation, a New York-based nonprofit, and the Colorado Department of Human Services. There also will be a formal process for complaints against an agency.

One important Hague rule specifies that agencies will have to disclose the full cost of an adoption upfront. Currently, foreign officials sometimes demand fees before handing over a child. "There have been costs that weren't recorded," says Fred Greenman, legal adviser to the American Adoption Congress. "People were instructed to take \$5,000 to \$10,000 in cash."

Another benefit for prospective parents: They should have access to more information about the child they are adopting. Under Hague regulations, agencies will have to try harder to get credible health information on the child -- and to supply it to the adoptive parents. They will also be required to try to gather more information on the biological parents and share it with the adoptive parents, subject to local privacy laws. As part of the anti-trafficking protections, they will also have to ensure appropriate documentation is available before the child is adopted.

Additionally, some countries may open their orphanages up for more U.S. adoptions. Nations such as Mexico, India, the Philippines and Bolivia -- which have all ratified the treaty -- have indicated they could allow more U.S. adoptions of their children once the Hague treaty is ratified, according to Mr. Atwood of the National Council for Adoption. Other countries have essentially shut the door to U.S. adoptions, but may also liberalize their policies.

But some critics say the benefits to prospective parents may come at a cost. Currently, the total price of an international adoption -- including travel to the child's country -- typically range from about \$15,000 to \$30,000. To become accredited under the Hague regulations, adoption agencies will have to pay an additional fee of about \$7,000 to \$13,000 every four years, and will also need to pay staff to compile documentation for the accreditation process and to make sure they are compliant with Hague regulations. "Who is ultimately going to pay that? The adoptive parents," says Joan Hollinger, a professor at the University of California Berkeley's law school and a specialist on adoption law.

There are other potential problems. While the U.S. should remain open to adoptions from most countries that are parties to the treaty, it may cut off adoptions from Guatemala, the third-largest source of U.S. foreign adoptions, supplying 3,783 last year. The country has ratified the Hague convention, but hasn't set up a centralized authority to oversee adoption.

In addition, there are concerns about trafficking of babies and coercion of birth mothers.

The situation is causing anxiety for some prospective adoptive parents, who wonder whether they stand to lose the approximately \$25,000 cost of a Guatemalan adoption if the country is cut off while they are in the middle of the process. "There should be a lot of concern," says Tom DiFilipo, chief executive and president of the Joint Council on International Children's Services, or JCICS, a nonprofit advocacy organization for children's rights. Mr. DiFilipo says Americans who have submitted their preliminary paperwork to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before any cutoff with Guatemala becomes official will be allowed to complete their adoption.

Even so, some adoption agencies, such as Spence-Chapin Services to Families and Children in New York, are advising people interested in adopting from Guatemala that they should also have a backup country in mind. "We just don't know what will happen," says Kathy Legg, the agency's executive director.

Many prospective parents also worry that the adoption agency they are working with won't get accredited, thereby holding up their adoption process. "If you're in the middle of an adoption and your agency fails to get accredited, your case would be transferred to another agency," says Richard Klarberg, chief executive and president of the Council on Accreditation.

Experts advise people interested in adopting a child from a Hague Convention country to ask the agency they are working with whether or not it is applying to become accredited. "You want an agency you know will continue to work in that country," says JCICS's Mr. DiFilipo.

Looking Abroad

Where to get information on international adoptions:

- The State Department (www.travel.state.gov), the central U.S. authority on adoptions under the Hague treaty.
- The National Council for Adoption (www.adoptioncouncil.org), a nonprofit research, education and advocacy group.
- The Joint Council on International Children's Services (www.jcics.org), a nonprofit membership association of adoption agencies and child-advocacy groups.

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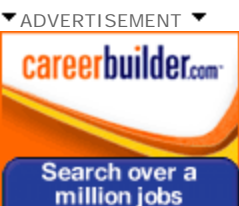
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Speaker shares info on adopting older kids

Stephanie Antonian Rutherford
The Enquirer

Being a foster parent is never easy, but adoption experts agree it's one of the most important ways people can help shape their community.

Today and Saturday, local adoption experts and social workers are on hand for a free seminar titled "Unconditional Commitment: You Gotta Believe," which aims to provide information and resources for area foster families or those considering fostering a child.

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The event began Thursday at McCamly Plaza Hotel and features national adoption expert Pat O'Brien. O'Brien is the founder and executive director of You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption & Permanency Movement Inc. — a New York City-based placement agency that focuses on finding permanent homes for teen and preteen children in foster care.

The free seminar is sponsored by the Foster Adoptive Family Resource & Support Center of Battle Creek and is funded by a \$25,690 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

On Thursday, O'Brien sat down with representatives from local fostering organizations, social workers and adoptive families — and had a candid talk about the benefits of adopting older children and the flaws in the state's foster-care system.

"Teens in the foster-care system are one of the few 'disposable' groups in this country," O'Brien said. "There is a dramatic need for older children to find a permanent home, but a lack of public education about this issue."

O'Brien said that teens who go through the system without finding a permanent family often end up homeless and have high rates of drug use, crime and teen pregnancy.

O'Brien also said that most states, including Michigan, have flawed foster-care systems that allow kids to bounce between temporary homes, rather than focusing on permanent placements.

"Often, foster families are asked to 'try it and see if it works' when they have a child placed in their care," O'Brien said. "We are only preparing parents to be temporary parents, not permanent. That won't work."

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For the Enquirer

Pat O'Brien, founder and executive of The Older Child Adoption & Permanency Movement Inc., is a keynote speaker at a three-day seminar.

To register

Registration for the seminar, "Unconditional Commitment: You Gotta Believe", still is available today and Saturday in the McCamly Ballroom.

For more information on the event, visit [yougottabelieve.org](#).

For more information on O'Brien, visit [yougottabelieve.org](#).

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Nancy French, interim executive director of the Foster Adoptive Family Resource & Support Center of Battle Creek, agreed that finding homes for teens can be extremely difficult.

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"There is an enormous need to find homes for older foster children in this area," French said. "Most families are interested in small children."

Jane Wolf, an adoptive mother of four who teaches foster and adoption seminars said that though teens can be a challenge, fostering and adopting children of any age is her most rewarding life experience.

"Adopting isn't easy. It gets hard," she said, "but when it gets hard, we have to remember — it's not about us, it's about them. It's about helping kids that need it."

Stephanie Antonian Rutherford is a general assignment reporter. She can be reached at 966-0665 or srutherford@battlecr.gannett.com.

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Seminar aims to ease adoption of older children

November 2, 2006 - 5:12PM



BATTLE CREEK (NEWS 3) - Unconditional commitment - that's the theme of a three-day seminar in Battle Creek dealing with the adoption of older children and teens.

The event is being held at McCamly Plaza. There are workshops on such topics as what questions to ask before adopting, how trauma affects children's behavior, and how adoption impacts the family.

One of the featured speakers is Pat O'Brien, founder and executive director of 'You Gotta

Believe' the Older Child Adoption and Permanency Movement Incorporated in New York.

"The answer is finding permanent parents for every teenager before they age out of care," he says. "Because the system is based on a system of temporary care - and we have a lot of kids who need permanent homes."

O'Brien estimates half of the homeless population comes from children who've aged out of foster care.

[Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange](#)



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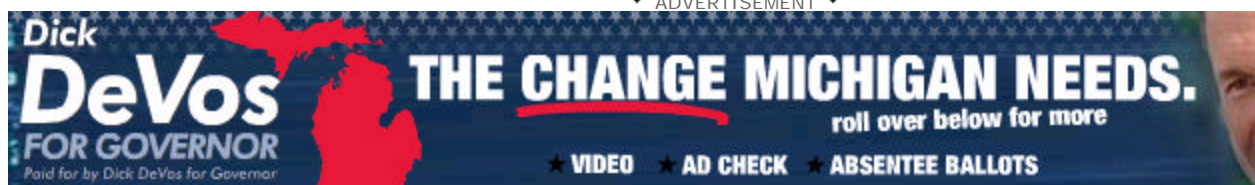
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Boy faces charges for bomb threat

By Lisa Roose-Church
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

A 14-year-old male student at Hartland Middle School at Ore Creek is facing criminal charges after alleged threat note in the hallway.

Detective Lt. Todd Luzod of the Livingston County Sheriff's Department said the student confessed that he wrote the threat because he was tired or bored with school. Police did not reveal the teen's identity because he is a juvenile.

Luzod said the teen intentionally dropped the note in the hallway. The note was found by a student who turned it into school administrators, who, in turn, contacted police.

Officials said the note indicated a bomb would go off at about 10:30 a.m. at Hartland High School. The rest of the note's contents were not disclosed.

Students at both schools were evacuated. Students at Ore Creek were bused on M-59, where they remained until about noon while police dogs specifically trained for bomb detection searched the school.

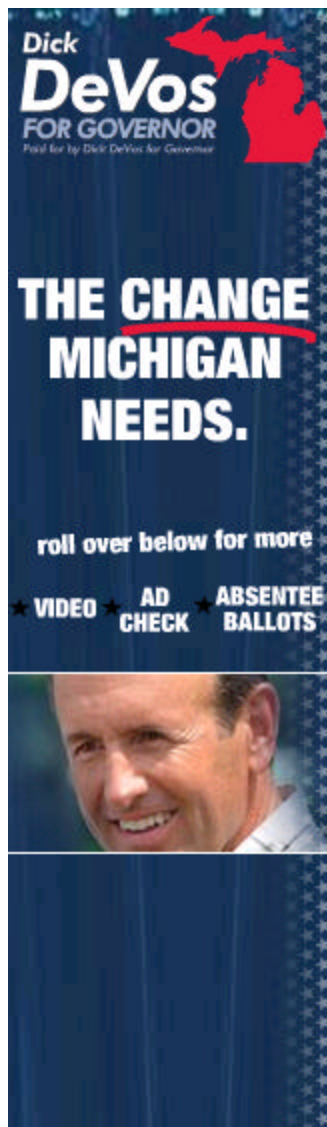
High school students, who were also temporarily bussed away from the school, returned to classes at 10 a.m. to return to classes.

A K-9 unit from the Sheriff's Department searched both schools and found no evidence.

The student also faces school disciplinary action.

Police have since released the teen to his parents' custody pending formal charges at Livingston County Juvenile Court.

Contact Lisa Roose-Church at (517) 552-2846 or at lrchurch@gannett.com.



Ludington Daily News

Posted: 11-2-2006

16-year-old boy escapes from officials twice ... but not a third time

By JOE BOOMGAARD

Daily News Staff Writer

BRANCH TWP. — “150 pounds of scared runs faster than 200 pounds of mad.”

Sgt. Kim Cole of the Mason County Sheriff's Office said that adage he learned from a long-time officer was again proven in an incident Wednesday afternoon for which a 16-year-old Tallman Lake boy faces multiple charges after he twice tried to escape from authorities.



But despite the boy's relative speed compared to the deputies, he couldn't escape the law for good.

Around 2:12 p.m., Mason County Sheriff's deputies went to a residence in the Tallman Lake area as part of an ongoing larceny investigation, according to a report. When deputies entered the house, the suspect tried to run from officers, but he was caught a short time later.

Deputies located a small amount of marijuana at the residence. He's being charged with resisting arrest and possession of marijuana in connection with that incident.

The boy was brought to the Mason County Jail and eventually turned over to juvenile court authorities from Midland, where he was wanted on probation violations.

During the transport, the boy claimed he was sick, and authorities pulled over near Walhalla and opened the door for him, and he again took off on foot after bumping one of the court workers out of the way.

Deputies, including Cole and Dep. Adam Lamb, Det. Mike Kenney and the K-9 Dep. John Mendham were called to track the suspect. The boy was caught after a foot chase in a thick brushy area near Walhalla off of U.S. 10 around 4:40 p.m., the report stated. The suspect was not wearing leg restraints at the time he ran from the court workers.

He was taken back into custody and transported to Midland.

Deputies may charge the suspect with assault for knocking one of the workers out of the way.

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Published November 3, 2006

New 211 phone line to provide assistance, answers

Service refers callers to agencies offering wide range of help

By Lisa Roose-Church
Special to the State Journal

Blustery cold winds slap at the windows while a family with young children huddles together for warmth because the electricity has been turned off for lack of payment.

Where can they find financial assistance?

By calling a simple three-digit number - 211.

The 211 service provides callers with confidential information and referrals to more than 90 human service agencies, such as help with heat and utility shutoff notices, mental health counseling or day care.

Nancy Rosso, executive director of the Livingston County United Way, said service assistance cuts across all areas of the community, from early childhood to hospice care.

An event to celebrate the 211 activation in Livingston County was held Wednesday at the Administration Building in Howell.

A 'simple phone call'

State Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Marion Township, said he believes the 211 program is a great idea that is worthwhile and long overdue.

"I know people call my office trying to get directed to the right place to go, and sometimes we have a whole host of agencies we need to refer them to; this is one simple phone call to put them in touch with the help they need," he said.

Garcia said it is a program he hopes will receive funding support on both the state and local government levels.

It is estimated that the program, which will be administered through the Huron Valley Ambulance service, will answer 25,000 to 40,000 calls for help a year.

Trained staff members will operate the line 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Variety of support

The program offers access to basic human needs such as food banks, clothing closets, shelters, rent and utility assistance; physical and mental health resources including Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health and children's health; and employment support such as financial assistance, job training, transportation and education programs.

The 211 service also offers support for older Americans and people with disabilities including adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care and homemaker services as well as support for children, youth and families including after-school programs, Head Start, summer camps, mentoring, tutoring and protective services.

Contact Lisa Roose-Church of the Livingston County Daily Press & Argus 552-2846 or at lrchurch@gannett.com.

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Heating help available



Bob Turner of Jeff LaFave Construction blows insulation into a home on South 13th Street in Escanaba Thursday. Low-income residents may be eligible for insulation and other services through the Weatherization Assistance Program, part of a federal block grant administered by the local Community Action Agency. (Daily Press photo by Kim Strom)

By Kim Strom - kstrom@dailypress.net

ESCANABA — Local residents don't have to be cold this winter. There are many programs to help low-income people pay heating bills.

The Department of Human Services is the first stop for people who have trouble paying their heating bills. When clients appear at St. Vincent de Paul or the Salvation Army, they are sent to DHS first, said St. Vincent's president Joe Salbert. "They have the most funds for assistance."

The Department of Human Services works with federal funds distributed to states under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant, said Nancy Beck, Family Independence manager.

The Michigan State Emergency Relief fund provides assistance for heat, electric and water through DHS. But clients must demonstrate emergency need such as a shut off notice, or in the case of propane, a low tank, she said. It's best to make an appointment to avoid waiting, said Beck. Clients need to bring in their shut off notice and income verification for the last 30 days and fill out an application.

Assistance for any program is usually based on a scale which considers income, family size and payment history. The department has a limited amount per family per year, and it helps if clients demonstrate effort to pay what they can, said Beck.

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If clients still have need after visiting DHS, they are referred to other agencies such as Community Action, St. Vincent de Paul or the Salvation Army, said Beck.

Currently the Salvation Army has no funds to help with heating assistance, said Salvation Army Major Bill Cox. It may receive state dollars in February, or have money to help when it begins fund-raising this month.

Two other programs are funded under the LIHEAP grant:

-- Home Heating Credit is administered by the Michigan Department of Treasury. It disperses funds to those who qualify based on income, number of exemptions and heating costs.

-- Weatherization provides free home energy conservation services to people who qualify, according to the Michigan.gov Web site. It's administered by local Community Action Agencies and provides services such as wall insulation, attic and foundation insulation, air leakage reduction, smoke detectors and dryer venting.

People need to make an appointment and fill out an application, said Joe Dehlin, director of Housing and Weatherization for the Delta-Schoolcraft Community Action Agency. Currently, the wait time is about one year in Delta County, he said.

According to Cathy Pearson, CAA executive assistant, people low on propane that need help should not wait, but seek assistance when tanks are 25 to 30 percent full. If a provider has to deliver fuel outside of regular routes and times, it may cost a trip charge of about \$150, she said.

"That's money that could go for fuel," she explained.

When all other funds are exhausted, the Community Action Agency has money from its "Walk for Warmth" program, said Pearson.

St. Vincent de Paul is a last stop resort and provides heating assistance, but its resources are limited, said Salbert. The local agencies try to work together to ensure people in need don't go without heat.

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